

at the mouths of rivers, and the sands of the sea-shore, where it consorts with various species of *Tringa*, and obtains from the surface the abundant harvest of food which is always left by a receding tide.

Of its nidification nothing is yet known; but, as the same may be said of *Tringa canutus*, *Tringa subarcuata*, and other *Limicole*, we can only look wistfully towards that large tract of continent in Northern and North-eastern Asia still unexplored, and dream of the oological treasures which are surely there enclosed.

XXXIX.—*Notes on some African Birds.*

By the Rev. H. B. TRISTRAM, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S., &c.

AMONG the many rarities in the last collection (alas! that we must say the *last*) sent home by the late Mr. Andersson from Damaraland and Ovampoland is one novelty, a very pretty little Lark, distinct from any which I can ascertain to have been described from South Africa, and to which I propose to give the name of

MEGALOPHONUS ANDERSSONI, sp. n.

M. capite læte castaneo-rufo; dorso fusco, plumarum parte mediâ nigricante: scapularibus fusco-nigris, castaneo terminatis: primariis nigricanti-brunneis, rufo externe limbatis: rectricibus fusco-nigris, duobus mediis castaneo-fuscis, pogonio cinnamomeo: corpore subtus (gula, abdomine) albo, in lateribus rufo-tincto, et collari pectorali cinnamomeo: utrinque macula brunneo-nigra jugulari: linea postoculari et superciliis albis: rostro carneo: pedibus et tarsis pallide brunneis.

Long. tot. 5·2, rostri a rictu 0·5, alæ 3·15, caudæ 2·2, tarsi 0·65, hall. c. ung. 0·5, poll. angl.

The type specimen was shot by Mr. Andersson at Otjimbingue, Damaraland, 13th March, 1865, and is marked by him doubtfully as "*Alauda spleniata*, Strickl.?" On referring to Strickland's description of that species (*Contrib. Ornith.* 1852, p. 152), it is evident that they are very different, and that Strickland's bird is identical with *Megalophonus cinereus*

(Vieill.)* (= *Alauda ruficapilla*, A. Smith = *A. ruficeps*, Rüpp.). Strickland observes that his *A. spleniata* is allied to Rüppell's *A. ruficeps*; but that (Neue Wirbelthiere, pl. 38. fig. 1) has a black, not a rufous, patch on each side of the breast. I suspect this arises from a little overcolouring in the plate; for in some of my specimens of *M. cinereus* the rufous patch blends into a brown-black spot at the top, just as in this little new species. It is possible that *A. ruficeps*, Rüpp., may be distinct; but *A. spleniata*, Strickl., and *M. ruficapillus*, A. Smith, must merge in *M. cinereus* (Vieill.), a very inappropriate name, which I would gladly reject but for the inexorable claims of priority.

Megalophonus anderssoni is nearly allied to *M. cinereus* in coloration, but differs in its proportions, and bears a relation to it similar to that which *M. africanoides* does to *M. africanus*, and *M. chenianus* to *M. sabota*. The rufous colour, however, is continuous, and not interrupted as in *M. cinereus*, and the spots of brown black on each side of the neck are very distinct.

The range of this bird is considerable, as Mr. Blanford has procured it in Abyssinia. His specimen is slightly more rufous on the flanks than mine.

Mr. Andersson forwarded the nest and eggs along with the skin. The eggs are very sparsely spotted, for a Lark's, with russet on a greenish-white ground, and are smaller than those of any other South-African Lark. In their pale and sparse coloration they resemble the eggs of *Certhilauda africana*.

If I may be permitted to add a few other remarks on some African birds, I would observe that, among the birds in Mr. Blanford's Abyssinian collection is a specimen of my *Certhilauda salvini* (Ibis, 1859, p. 57). Dr. Finsch has pronounced it to be the type of a new species; but I have, along with Mr. Gurney, compared it with my type, and we are both agreed as to its identity. At the same time, I do not think my species is more than a local race. Dr. Finsch would distinguish the Abyssinian bird also by the thickly-spotted breast. This is a most variable character in *Certhilauda desertorum* and *C. salvini* alike; and

[*Qu.* (Gmel.)?—Ed.]

in my series I find specimens varying from a thickly-spotted gorget to one almost plain.

Mr. Gurney has kindly been examining my African birds with me; and his valuable assistance enables me to make some rectifications in synonymy, and to extend the boundaries of the range of some species.

The range of *Phasmoptynx capensis* must now be extended to Asia, for it has recently been procured by Mr. Wyatt on Mount Sinai in young plumage. Its range is thus from the Cape to Spain and Arabia.

Hirundo albigularis, Strickl. (Cont. Orn. 1849, p. 17, pl. xv.), with which *H. albigula*, Bp., and *H. rufifrons*, Less. (no. 85, Layard, B. S. Afr.), are synonymous, must probably be put down as a synonym of *H. rufifrons*, Vieill. (no. 80, Layard), which, however, has been incorrectly described by Stephens as having a black throat and breast. This is the only difference in the descriptions, and seems to have arisen from a mistake of Le Vaillant's. Specimens from Messrs. Layard, Andersson, and Ayres are all identical; and no one appears ever to have seen the Swallow with a black throat.

There have been two species confounded under the names of *Cotyle palustris*, Steph. (= *Hirundo paludicola*, Vieill. = *C. paludibula*, Rüpp.)—one from the north, the other from the south of Africa. The northern bird, which I have obtained by the Dead Sea, and received from Egypt and Abyssinia, is perfectly distinct from the southern, having, like *C. rupestris* and *C. fuligula*, a large white spot on the inner web of each of the rectrices, except the outer and middle covering pairs. It is larger than the southern bird—which has no white spots on the rectrices, and has also the throat and breast darker brown, gradually blending into pure white on the abdomen, while the northern bird has the whole under surface of a uniform dirty white colour.

It is curious that the distinction has not been before noted. I only discovered it on receiving specimens of the South-African bird. As the original description undoubtedly refers to the South-African species, I should propose, in preference to taking a new name for the northern species, to assign to it Rüppell's

Cotyle paludibula, though the description is imperfect. In that case, this name *C. paludibula* should stand for *C. palustris* in the various notices of this Martin by Mr. Taylor, myself (P. Z. S. 1864, p. 443; Ibis, 1867, p. 363), and others in Northern and Eastern Africa.

There is some confusion about *Anthus sordidus*, Rupp. Mr. Blyth has adopted the name for an Indian species, which appears to be perfectly distinct (*cf. supra*, p. 120). Through the kindness of Mr. Blanford I have just had the opportunity of examining six specimens from Abyssinia, whence came Rüppell's type, and find them clearly distinct from the South-African, East-African, and Indian birds.

Mr. Layard treats *Anthus sordidus*, Rüpp. (no. 226, Layard), as identical with *Corydalla sordida*, Blyth, and *Anthus gouldi*, Fraser. But a typical specimen of *A. gouldi*, Fraser, from the Gaboon, shows its distinctness from either the Indian or the Abyssinian bird. I fear I shall have to crave pardon from the goodnature of my old friend Mr. Layard, if I not only assert the distinctness of his three synonyms, but also raise a doubt as to whether any one of the three has yet occurred within his limits. May it not have been *A. caffer*? One specimen, kindly sent me by Mr. Layard, is certainly the latter, though called *A. sordidus*. I have *A. caffer* again from the Transvaal territory.

The history of *A. sordidus* being recorded from Natal is, that Mr. Gurney, on Mr. G. R. Gray's authority, included *A. gouldi* in the first list of birds sent by Mr. Ayres from Natal (Ibis, 1860, p. 208). But *A. gouldi* being not a synonym, and possibly the bird having been *A. caffer* (the large race), it may not be absolute heresy to question the occurrence of Rüppell's bird in South Africa. It will also be interesting to compare *Anthus calthropæ*, Layard, with *A. brachyurus*, Sund. *Anthus chloris*, Licht., however, is an addition to Mr. Layard's list, having been procured at Cape Town by Andersson*.

Turning to a very different group of birds, I am unable to separate *Butorides atricapilla* (Afzel.) (no. 587, Layard) from *B. javanica* (Horsf.) as found on the mainland of China. Mr. Swinhoe's specimens from Formosa are considerably larger,

* [*Cf. supra*, p. 368.—ED.]

but differ in no other respect from *B. atricapilla* as sent by Mr. Ayres from Natal. Mr. Gurney also agrees with me in the opinion that *B. atricapilla* is identical with *B. javanica**.

XL.—*Notes on the Bills of the species of Flamingo (Phænicopterus).* By G. R. GRAY, F.R.S. &c.

(Plates XIII.—XV.)

FROM the days of Linnæus (1758) down to those of Latham (1824) it was supposed that only two species of *Phænicopterus* existed; and one of these was considered to inhabit both the Old World and the New. The European bird was regarded by Bonaterre, in 1790, as a variety of the American one; but in 1820 Temminck proposed to separate the European bird as a distinct species, under the name of *P. antiquorum*, leaving the American one as *P. ruber*. The correctness of this separation, however, was doubted by Latham in his 'History of Birds,' in 1824. Another species, not mentioned by previous authors, was added in 1797 by Geoffroy St.-Hilaire, who described a small one under the name of *P. minor* from West Africa, which made the third species then (that is, prior to 1820) known, viz. *P. ruber*, L. 1758, *P. chilensis*, Mol. 1782, and *P. minor*, Geoffr. 1797. Since then the genus has been increased by the discovery of five other species, about the distinctness of which there exists much diversity of opinion. In the hope of putting an end to these doubts, I have been induced to collect together the following notes and to have drawn the accompanying plates of the bills of Flamingos of different localities. They will, I hope, assist in exemplifying their peculiar conformation, and may be regarded as representations of their specific characters, so that the subject of each of them may become in future an acknowledged species.

The general characteristics of the formation of these singular bills have so often been described by authors, that it is unnecessary to repeat them here; and I will at once endeavour

* [Cf. Sundevall, Öfvers. K. Vet. Ac. Förhandl. 1849, p. 163, and Schrenck, Reis. Amur-Lande, i. p. 437.—Ed.]